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Leza L Olson 10/10/2006 12:37:45 PM From DB/Inbox: Leza L Olson

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Text:

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 03957

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ACTION: ECON  
INFO: POL DCM AMB FCS AID PD ADM IPSC SCI IMO CONS  
RES

DISSEMINATION: ECON  
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: CDA:GCRETZ  
DRAFTED: ECON:AABELL  
CLEARED: CDA:GCRETZ, POL:MSIEVERS, ECON:JWITOW

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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6787  
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TEL AVIV 003957

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/06/2016  
TAGS: [EG](#) [IS](#) [LE](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [IR](#)  
SUBJECT: AVI DICHTER BRIEFS CODEL PRYOR ON STATE OF ISRAELI  
SECURITY

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Gene A. Cretz for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

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SUMMARY  
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1. (C) In an October 3 meeting with Senator Mark Pryor (D-AR), Public Security Minister Avi Dichter attributed Israel's relative success in stopping West Bank suicide bombers to the separation barrier and to "actionable intelligence" provided by an extensive network of informants. Commenting on the current state of political hostilities in the Palestinian territories, he assessed that Fatah was "ten times" stronger than Hamas in the West Bank, largely due to GOI arrests of key Hamas leaders there. Dichter, who spent many years in Gaza, concluded that Fatah "must win" in Gaza -- where it is now "about even" with Hamas -- if it is to retain authority over the entire PA. On Lebanon, he was encouraged that he saw no one visibly armed while watching Al Jazeera coverage of Hizballah's recent "victory parade" in Beirut. He compared Israel's performance in the recent conflict to the Yom Kippur War, when Israel learned many "hard lessons" early on before achieving a decisive victory. Finally, Dichter said that he was "very disappointed" that the Egyptians are not doing more to interdict weapons smuggling across the Sinai border into Gaza. End summary.

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DEFENSIVE SHIELD STILL YIELDING RESULTS  
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2. (C) Minister of Public Security and former Shin Bet Director Avraham (Avi) Dichter (Kadima party) provided Senator Mark Pryor with an in-depth analysis of the current

threat of Palestinian terrorism. Demonstrating total recall of exact dates and casualty statistics, Dichter first recounted the major terrorist attacks of the second Intifadah, of which he claimed that 90 per cent had originated from the West Bank. Asserting that the GOI had thwarted over 95 per cent of would-be suicide bombers in 2006, he attributed this success to both the separation barrier and to "actionable intelligence" provided by networks of informants that were established as part of the GOI's Operation Defensive Shield in 2002. He said that such "solid" intelligence was the product of four years of arresting and interrogating thousands of Palestinians.

13. (C) Dichter explained that there was no equivalent to Defensive Shield in Gaza, because then-Prime Minister Sharon had feared that a multi-front operation would have "paralyzed the country." According to Dichter, the absence of an extensive intelligence network and military presence on the ground in Gaza has limited the GOI's options for pre-empting Gaza-based terrorist operations. Thus, instead of arrests and interrogations, the GOI's primary tactic in Gaza remains targeted killings. Dichter pointed out that no targeted killings had occurred in the West Bank since Defensive Shield began in 2002.

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PALESTINIANS AND ISRAELI ARABS  
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14. (C) Commenting on the current state of political hostilities in the Palestinian territories, he assessed that Fatah was "ten times" stronger than Hamas in the West Bank, largely due to GOI arrests of key Hamas leaders there. In Gaza, he maintained that Hamas is "about even" with Fatah. Dichter, who spent many years in Gaza, concluded that Fatah "must win" in Gaza if it is to retain authority over the entire PA.

15. (C) Dichter candidly remarked that the separation barrier has had a secondary effect of cutting relations between Israeli Arabs and the Palestinians. He said that Israeli Arabs had never been "substantially involved" in Palestinian terrorism because they realize that such involvement would invite "severe repercussions."

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WAR WITH HIZBALLAH  
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16. (C) Dichter, a fluent Arabic speaker, confided that he watched the recent Hizballah "victory parade" in Beirut on Al Jazeera. He was encouraged that he saw no one visibly armed in a crowd that was estimated to number 500,000. He also found it remarkable that Nasrallah broke from tradition during his "victory speech" and did not name any of the "martyrs" who were killed in the conflict with Israel, even though the GOI is certain that over 500 Hizballah fighters were killed. Dichter said that Nasrallah understands that the "next session" of conflict with Israel will be much worse for Hizballah. He compared Israel's recent 35-day conflict with the early stages of the Yom Kippur War (in which he fought as a commando in the elite Sayeret Matkal). Dichter said that, as in 1973, the GOI would learn the hard way from its early mistakes, make necessary adjustments, and "finish 100km from Cairo and 40km from Damascus."

17. (C) Analyzing the damage from the recent war, Dichter said that Hizballah had killed 53 Israeli civilians with some 4000 rockets fired over 35 days. Stating that he did not mean to minimize the tragedy of 53 dead non-combatants, he said that two suicide bombers could have achieved the same result on a single day in Tel Aviv. He again referred to the second Intifadah, comparing the 53 fatalities from the summer of 2006 to over 900 Israelis killed between 2000-2003, including some 150 in March 2002 alone.

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IRANIAN NIGHTMARES  
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¶18. (C) Regarding Iran, Dichter pointed to the year 1998 as the beginning of a strategic change in Iranian foreign policy that has continued until the present. He said that Iran's "worst nightmare" nearly became reality in 1998, when Israel was seriously discussing peace with Syria. According to Dichter, the prospect of Israel at peace with all of its Arab neighbors had frightened Iran sufficiently as to become "strategically involved" in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

He said that Iran's involvement began with financial sponsorship of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and soon included financial and material support for Hamas in Gaza. Dichter concluded that the Hamas electoral victory in the January 2006 elections represented a strategic victory in Iran's campaign against Israel.

¶19. (C) Dichter told the Senator that during the Iran-Iraq War, Iranian leaders had sent twelve year-old children to certain death in human wave attacks against Saddam's military. "Leaders who would do this," he argued, "will do anything." Addressing Mahmoud Ahmadinejad specifically, Dichter said that the Iranian President views himself as a modern-day Salah al-Din, the Kurdish general who drove the Crusader's from the Holy Land. Reflecting on his experience as a career intelligence officer, Dichter observed that the American, British, German and Israeli intelligence services spend billions of dollars annually to know a political leader's intentions. "Ahmadinejad," he claimed, "has given his intentions away for free. He intends to destroy us."

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DISAPPOINTED WITH EGYPT  
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¶10. (C) Dichter said that he was "very disappointed" that the Egyptians are not doing more to interdict weapons smuggling across the Sinai border into Gaza. He recounted the special agreement that Israel had signed in 2005 to allow the elite Egyptian border guards to patrol the border in order to prevent such smuggling. He commented sardonically that the only difference on the ground since the border guards replaced the Egyptian police is that "the price of the bribe has gone up." Dichter said that he had addressed this issue with Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman on many occasions, but that the Egyptians view the Sinai as a "no man's land," and take an entirely different attitude towards security there than they do towards security west of the Suez Canal.

¶11. (SBU) Participation.

ISRAEL:

Minister of Public Security Avi Dichter (Kadima)  
Director of International Relations Natan Rotenberg  
MFA Counselor Iris Sapir

USA:

Senator Mark Pryor (D-AR)  
Econoff

¶12. (SBU) CODEL Pryor did not have the opportunity to clear this cable prior to departure.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/telaviv>

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CRETZ